

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Sept. 26, 2003

For immediate release

- 1. Public invited to regional water quality meetings**
- 2. Public meetings to discuss proposed amendments to water quality standards**
- 3. Beach advisory posted at Lake Geode; last week of posting beaches for the season**

PUBLIC INVITED TO REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MEETINGS

DES MOINES — Iowans are encouraged to discuss water quality issues at a series of eight public meetings to be held around the state during the month of October by the Iowa DNR.

Each meeting will begin with information regarding the status of water quality and trends in Iowa, nutrients in the water and where they come from and an overview of the waters considered to be impaired. A local water quality project will also be featured at each site showing positive results to improve Iowa's rivers, lakes, and streams.

Following the information from DNR staff, the public will be given an opportunity to participate in an open discussion of water quality issues in Iowa. Input and ideas from the public at these meetings will be used at the Iowa Water Summit on November 24 in Ames.

"We hope this will be the beginning of an important, state-wide discussion of the issues we face and what steps we are going to have to take to make significant improvements to water quality in Iowa," said DNR Director Jeff Vonk.

"We have a responsibility as a state to clean our waterways. As we work to create opportunities for good jobs and to recruit and retain well-educated workers, we need to recognize the economic advantages of clean waterways. This is a crucial issue for our future and should be viewed as a top priority for state government," Governor Vilsack said when he announced the Iowa Water Summit on July 28 of this year.

The meetings are scheduled from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

October 7, 2003

Kirkwood Community College
6301 Kirkwood Blvd. SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404
Iowa Room in Iowa Hall (3rd floor)

October 8, 2003

Northeast Iowa Community College
1625 Highway 150
Calmar, IA 52132
Wilder Auditorium

October 14, 2003

Des Moines Area Community College
2006 South Ankeny Blvd
Ankeny, IA 50021-3993
Auditorium

October 16, 2003

Rathbun Regional Water Association
16166 HWY J29
Centerville, IA 52544-8307
Water Treatment Plant

October 21, 2003

Southwestern Community College
1501 W. Townline
Creston IA 50801
Room 220

October 22, 2003

North Iowa Area Community College
500 College Drive
Mason City, IA 50401-7299
Muse Norris Center Room 180C

October 23, 2003

Western Iowa Technical College
4647 Stone Avenue
PO Box 5199
Sioux City IA 51106
Building A, Room 920, Large Lecture Hall

October 30, 2003

Iowa Lakes Community College
2021 Main Street
Emmettsburg, IA 50536
Auditorium

The general agenda for each session:

6:30 PM Status of Water Quality and Water Quality Trends in Iowa
6:50 PM Iowa's Nutrient Budget and Nutrients in Iowa's Waters
7:10 PM Iowa's Impaired Waters
7:30 PM Break
7:40 PM Local Water Quality Program
8:00 PM Public Participation
9:00 PM Adjourn

Questions or comments should be directed to Bernie Hoyer (515) 281-7247 or Bernie.Hoyer@dnr.state.ia.us.

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PUBLIC MEETINGS TO DISCUSS AMENDMENTS TO WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

DES MOINES — Iowans are invited to six public meetings addressing DNR-proposed changes to Iowa rules protecting water quality.

The amendments will affect Chapter 61 of the Iowa Administrative Code, "Water Quality Standards." The standards are used to define, measure and protect the quality of Iowa's surface and ground water.

Some of the changes being considered for change include:

- Establishing chloride limits to protect aquatic life and general uses for water bodies. Public input is particularly requested to establish reasonable chloride levels to protect general uses such as livestock and wildlife watering.
- Creating a site-specific approach in establishing discharge limits for dissolved solids. This would replace a numerical standard for total dissolved solids currently used for all waters with a guideline value. Sources proposing to discharge at a level higher than the guideline would be required to perform toxicity testing to clearly demonstrate that the aquatic life in the receiving stream would be protected before a permit would be issued.

- Classifying approximately 300 publicly owned lakes and wetlands. The proposed change would designate these waters as supporting warm-water game fish and associated aquatic communities, providing additional protection from being polluted.
- Classifying a number of stream segments for secondary contact recreational uses. In addition to the existing aquatic life classifications for these streams, the changes would also provide bacteria water standards designed to protect the public from incidental or accidental contact associated with recreational activities such as fishing or boating.

The public is invited to present oral or written comments about these proposed amendments at the following public hearings:

- Oct. 7, 2 p.m. Municipal Utilities conference room, 15 W. Third St., Atlantic
- Oct. 9, 7 p.m. Decorah City Hall meeting room, 400 Claiborne Dr., Decorah
- Oct. 10, 1 p.m. Clear Lake community meeting room, 15 N. Sixth St., Clear Lake
- Oct. 13, 11 a.m. Cherokee Community Center, 530 W. Bluff St., Cherokee
- Oct. 15, 11 a.m. Iowa City Public Library meeting room A, 123 S. Linn St. (use temporary entrance in Pedestrian Mall), Iowa City
- Oct. 17, 1 p.m. Wallace State Office Building, 5th floor conference rooms, 900 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines

Additional information on Iowa's Water Quality Standards can be found on the DNR's Web site at <http://www.state.ia.us/dnr/organiza/epd/wtresrce/wquality/index.htm>.

As required by recent legislation, a brief Fiscal Impact Statement has been prepared for this Notice and is available upon request. It can also be found at the above Web site.

Copies of Environmental Protection Commission rules may be obtained from Cecilia Nelson, Records Center, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 900 East Grand, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

Any person may submit written suggestions or comments on the proposed rule changes through October 31, 2003. Send suggestions or comments to: Ralph Turkle, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 900 East Grand, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034 or by FAX at (515) 281-8895 or by e-mail to ralph.turkle@dnr.state.ia.us. Additional questions may be addressed by contacting Ralph Turkle at (515) 281-7025.

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BEACH ADVISORY POSTED AT LAKE GEODE; LAST WEEK OF POSTING BEACHES FOR THE SEASON

DES MOINES — A swimming advisory will be posted at Lake Geode in Henry County because of elevated E. coli levels.

This will be the last week that the DNR posts beaches for bacteria levels because of the rapidly declining water temperatures and limited seasonal use. Monitoring of bacteria at the beaches for scientific purposes will continue through mid-November and results will continue to be posted weekly on the DNR's website, but beach postings will discontinue.

Lake Geode had an E. coli count of 450 this week following a count of 2,100. It will be posted the last week of the season because it exceeds the one-time standard of 235.

Bacteria levels at beaches typically rise as a result of runoff from rainfall and can return to normal in less than two days with sunny conditions. Samples are collected from the beaches on Monday and Tuesday. There was widespread rain over much of Iowa in the last week likely elevating bacteria levels at some locations.

Bacteria levels at Iowa's 35 other state park beaches are within acceptable levels.

The DNR is also advising normal precautions for contact with any surface water in Iowa:

- Avoid swallowing the water
- Avoid the water if you have open cuts or wounds that could become infected by contact with bacteria
- Swimming is not recommended for persons who are very young or very old and may have problems avoiding ingestion of water, and people who have weakened immune systems due to other medical conditions.

Weekly beach monitoring results are posted on the DNR's website every Friday afternoon at <http://www.iowadnr.com/news/beach.html>

For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395 or Janice Boekhoff, 319-335-1574.